

Orientalism and the Invention of Kashmiri Religion(s)

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Abstract The sordid research process behind the *Lallā-Vākyāni*, the first major English translation of poetry attributed to the fourteenth-century saint Lal Ded, reveals strategies employed by George Grierson, Lionel Barnett, and Mukund Ram Shastri to recast Lal Ded and the cultural heritage of Kashmir as exclusively Hindu. Contradicting the earliest depictions of Lal Ded in sixteenth-century Persian hagiographies, the *Lallā-Vākyāni* was instrumental to the modern invention of Kashmiri Śaiva Hinduism as the true religion and culture of Kashmir completely devoid of any connection—religious, historical, or social—with Islam, simultaneously serving Orientalist agendas and politics of the Ḍogrā court.

Keywords Lal Ded · *Lallā-Vākyāni* · Orientalism · Grierson · Kashmir Śaivism · Ḍogrā

Lal Ded is celebrated today as a Hindu saint of fourteenth-century Kashmir whose poetry expresses a *bhakti* devotionism towards Śiva. One of her most famous poems reads:

Siva abides in all that is, everywhere;
Then do not discriminate between
a Hindu or a Musalman.
If thou art wise, know thyself;
That is true knowledge of the Lord (Kaul 1973: 107, poem 57).

This poem is particularly popular among advocates of Kashmīriyat, the idea that Kashmir has a unique, noncommunal cultural heritage. In this time of Hindu-Muslim communal violence and military conflicts over Kashmir, advocates of

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Kashmīriyat seek to revive that noncommunal Kashmiri culture as a possible resolution to these disputes. Even among advocates of Kashmīriyat, Lal Ded is most often identified as a devout Hindu, but it is implied that her magnanimity or protosecular understanding allowed her to look past religious differences toward a unified Kashmiri community.¹

While this image of Lal Ded may be an appealing one, it is also rather new. It is my contention that the current manner in which Lal Ded is identified as a Śaiva Hindu *bhakti* saint can be traced back to the first publication of her poetry in English titled *Lallā-Vākyāni*.² George Grierson and Lionel D. Barnett translated and published this landmark text in 1920 in collaboration with their Kashmiri research assistant Mukund Ram Shastri, who was primarily employed by the Research and Publication Department of the Hindu Dogrā-ruled princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. I contend that the version of Lal Ded depicted in this text reconstructs Kashmir's culture and past as Hindu, Romantic, feminine, and Sanskritic, a reconstruction that simultaneously served the interests of Orientalist scholarship and Dogrā rule. More critically, I argue that making Lal Ded this kind of Hindu saint not only distorts Lal Ded's previously complex identity and legacy, but also works to circumscribe Hindus and Muslims into two distinct and mutually exclusive collective identities incapable of nuanced interreligious understandings.

Lal Ded in the Earliest Records

What was Lal Ded's legacy and identity before Grierson and the *Lallā-Vākyāni*? The earliest archival records on Lal Ded are not collections of her poetry, which first appear in the mid-seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries, but Persian hagiographical accounts written in the 1580s. Nund Rishī, the founder of the Rishī Order of Śūfis, considered himself the spiritual successor of Lal Ded. However, the first people to write about Lal Ded were not Rishī Śūfis, but members of the Suhrawardī Śūfī Order. These Suhrawardīs were disciples of Shaikh Ḥamza Makhdūm (1494–1576), whose close companion was the Śūfī Shaikh Hardī Rishī. Because of this relationship, disciples of Ḥamza wrote hagiographies about Hardī, his lineage of Rishī Śūfī saints, and their associates. In addition to honoring a close friend of their Śūfī master, memorializing the ascetic Rishī saints and those connected with them was an attempt to absorb them into the Suhrawardī lineage. The Rishīs were renowned for their extreme ascetic discipline, the miracles they performed, their

¹ There are notable exceptions to the predominant framing of Lal Ded as a devout Hindu, some of which identify her instead as either a Śūfī or as a wholly syncretic saint. These exceptions will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

² Affiliating Lal Ded with certain Hindu or Śaiva ideas likely preceded the *Lallā-Vākyāni*, as evidenced by the eighteenth-century Bhāskara manuscript that translates Kashmiri poetry attributed to Lal Ded into Sanskrit. This manuscript and others will be discussed more extensively later in this paper. Nevertheless, it is my contention that the creation and publication of the *Lallā-Vākyāni* may mark a major transition point in which the predominant understanding of Lal Ded became one in which she is exclusively, or at least first and foremost, Hindu and that what it means to be Hindu is to identify oneself as a member of a distinct and delimited religious community that worships the gods from classical Sanskrit scriptures and is mutually exclusive from other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, but most especially Islam.

relationships with powerful spiritual beings of the Kashmiri landscape, and their network of shrines on sacred sites in the remote Kashmiri countryside and wilderness. Thus, claiming the Rishīs as one's own served a number of religious, social, and political interests.

The earliest, and foundational, accounts of Lal Ded are found in Muḥammad 'Alī Raina's 1587 *Tazkirat al-ʿArifīn* (1587: 36a–42a). Since Nund Rishī is said to have considered himself Lal Ded's spiritual successor, it comes as no surprise that the first of Raina's accounts narrates an interaction between Lal Ded and Nund Rishī. However, most of the subsequent accounts narrate Lal Ded's direct interaction with Suhrawardī saints, especially the renowned Jalāl al-Dīn Makhdūm Jahāniyān Jahāngasht al-Bukhārī (*died* 1383) (Schimmel 1975: 354). When Lal Ded and Makhdūm Jahāniyān meet in these accounts, they greet each other and express mutual respect. However, when they ascend the higher celestial planes together and stand before the Throne of God, Makhdūm Jahāniyān recognizes that Lal Ded is more spiritually advanced than himself. Upon return, *he* asks for *her* blessing. He then teaches her his spiritual methods and grants her his *ijāzat*, or spiritual license, so that she can pass on his teachings, with her spiritual authority, to future Suhrawardī Ṣūfīs.

While it is doubtful whether Makhdūm Jahāniyān ever visited Kashmir, connecting Lal Ded with Makhdūm Jahāniyān, a famous world traveler, serves Raina and his Suhrawardī Ṣūfī companions in several ways. First, Makhdūm Jahāniyān is an eminent Suhrawardī Ṣūfī but only a distant member of Ḥamza's Suhrawardī lineage. Connecting Makhdūm Jahāniyān and Ḥamza more directly would impart more of Makhdūm Jahāniyān's power and authority to Ḥamza. In another of Raina's accounts, Lal Ded and Makhdūm Jahāniyān are said to have traveled to Tujar, Ḥamza's future birthplace, and witnessed the constellations of stars that would be present when Ḥamza is ultimately born, presumably so that she could join the host of saints and spiritual beings who will visit Ḥamza at his birth (1587: 37a). Then in later accounts, Raina reveals that Lal Ded ultimately gave spiritual instruction to Ḥamza personally from beyond the grave (1587: 39a–42a). Through such narratives, Raina is able to directly connect Ḥamza to Makhdūm Jahāniyān with only one intermediary, Lal Ded, whom Makhdūm Jahāniyān considered to be spiritually superior to himself.

In addition to utilizing Lal Ded as a conduit, or indeed a spiritual amplifier, between Ḥamza Makhdūm and Makhdūm Jahāniyān, Nund Rishī, and other prominent Ṣūfī saints (for example, Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī), Raina depicts Lal Ded as a powerful, miracle-producing saint in her own right. Through her commanding presence and authoritative pronouncement, she renders a bloodthirsty tiger a pious renouncer (*majzūb*) who only craves the Divine (Raina 1587: 37b–38a). Despite her nudity, her nakedness is veiled from humanity with a covering unknown to mankind, just as the stars are hidden from view in the presence of the sun (Raina 1587: 40a). She even appears before Raina himself despite his being in a nearly inaccessible solitary retreat, and she teaches him advanced spiritual practices that result in his ecstatic experience of union with both his master Ḥamza and the Divine (1587: 39a–40a). Raina describes Lal Ded as one who, despite having lived her whole life in Kashmir, has knowledge of all spiritual masters of the past,

present, and future and their relative spiritual status (*hāl*) (1587: 36b) and who, “although having the form of a woman,” surpassed noteworthy men³ (36a) and had no equal in her time among the great men of the Šūfī path (*nāmī mardān ʔarīqat*) (41b–42a).

Common to all of these narratives is also a connection made between Lal Ded and the land of Kashmir itself, whether it is through the repeated mentioning of her living her whole life in Kashmir, of her traveling on foot to locations across Kashmir, or of her direct, spiritual interactions with creatures of the Kashmiri wilderness. Thus, early Persian sources on Lal Ded like Raina’s *Tazkirat al-‘Arīfīn* include accounts of Lal Ded not only to establish a powerful spiritual link between recent Šūfī masters and authoritative Šūfis of the past, but also to integrate and embed these Šūfis into Kashmir. Chitrlekha Zutshi’s (2014: 35–71) recent scholarship has demonstrated how many early Persian texts written about Šūfis in Kashmir integrated preexisting histories of Kashmir and the Kashmiri landscape into their narratives of Šūfis and Sulṭāns in order to simultaneously render Kashmir an Islamic space as well as indigenize these Šūfis and Sulṭāns into Kashmir. These insights coincide with those of A. Azfar Moin’s (2012) work on Mughal North India in which he argued that the creation of a network of Šūfī shrines across the landscape of a particular geographic region served not only to settle that location and assert a Šūfī Order’s spiritual authority over it, but also to make necessary an alliance between that Šūfī Order and the local ruler if one sought to be a fully effective ruler over the region. Therefore, Persian sources depicting Lal Ded, which are the earliest known writings on her in the archive, are imbricated in their own social, religious, and political vested interests.⁴

What is noteworthy, though, is that nowhere in these narratives is Lal Ded said to have converted to Islam. Her spiritual superiority clearly precedes her encounter with the Šūfis. Thus, according to Raina’s *Tazkirat al-‘Arīfīn* and other Persian hagiographies in which she is exceedingly praised as a saint, Lal Ded was a non-Muslim who stood toe-to-toe with the greatest Šūfis of her time. Furthermore, she was a non-Muslim whom many Šūfis sought to include in their own spiritual lineages in order to affiliate themselves with her Šūfī associates and to partake in her own spiritual authority and connection to the land of Kashmir.

Lal Ded in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*

Raina’s image of Lal Ded differs greatly from how Grierson and Barnett describe her in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. They introduce her as follows:

Lallā, or Lal Dēd, the authoress of the following verses, was a wandering ascetic, and devoted follower of this cult [of Kashmir Śaivism]. The importance of her songs consists in the fact that they are not a systematic

³ A transliteration of the original Persian text reads, “*agarche bašūrat ‘aurat būd walekin bama’ná az mardān nāmī gažashteh asf*” (Raina 1587: 36a).

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of these religious and political dynamics of early modern Kashmir, see Zutshi 2014 and Accardi 2014.

exposé of Śaivism on the lines laid down by the theologians who preceded her, but illustrate the religion on its popular side (Grierson and Barnett 1920: v).

Later describing her as “wandering about in a semi-nude state, dancing and singing in ecstatic frenzy” (1920: 3), Grierson and Barnett cast Lal Ded as a wild, feminine Hindu wholly absorbed in her ecstatic devotion who is best known through her poetry, which expresses Kashmir Śaivism to the masses. That this image of Lal Ded is the one Grierson and Barnett aim to project is illustrated in the full title of their book: *Lallā-Vākyāni, or the Wise Sayings of Lal Dēd, a Mystic Poetess of Ancient Kashmīr*. Lal Ded is a *mystic*, like “the Hebrew *nābī*’s [*sic*] of old and the more modern Dervishes” (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 3), but *ancient*, that is, Sanskritic, and thus predating Islam and these “more modern Dervishes.” However, she is chiefly designated as a *poetess*, and thus as a feminine figure identified primarily by the poetry she is said to have produced.

Grierson and Barnett (1920: 5) admit that the earliest known manuscripts of Lal Ded’s poetry are the two obtained by the famous Orientalist Marc Aurel Stein. One of these manuscripts was written in the early 1700s by Rājānaka Bhāskara, who records Kashmiri verses attributed to Lal Ded along with his own Sanskrit translations.⁵ The second manuscript is bound within a codex containing seven other Sanskrit texts, including Sāhib Kaul’s *Citsphārādvayaprabandha*,⁶ which concludes with a colophon dating the text to Vikram 1700, or 1644 CE. It is unclear whether this date and Sāhib Kaul’s authorship applies to the entirety of the codex, including the Lal Ded manuscript, or only to the *Citsphārādvayaprabandha* (Clauson and MacDonell 1912: 622–25). Nevertheless, at least three centuries passed between the time Lal Ded is said to have lived and the production of the first manuscripts of her poetry, a fact that should cast some doubt on the authenticity of the poetry attributed to Lal Ded or at least attenuate the impulse to primarily identify Lal Ded with her poetry.

More important perhaps are the implications of the textual and historical contexts of these manuscripts, especially vis-à-vis the Persian hagiographies. First, these manuscripts of poetry attributed to Lal Ded first appear at the earliest fifty-seven years after Raina’s *Tazkirat al-‘Arifīn* (1587), fifty-six years after Ḥaidar Tulmūlī’s *Hidāyat al-Mukhlīṣīn* (1588), thirteen years after Naṣīb al-Dīn Ghāzī’s *Rishī Nāmā* (1631), and only nine years before Dāwud Mishkāṭī’s *Asrār al-Abrār* (1653).⁷ All four of these Persian hagiographies include accounts of Lal Ded, and those accounts become longer and more elaborate in each successive text. Furthermore, from Ghāzī’s *Rishī Nāmā* onwards, these Persian hagiographies attribute verses of vernacular Kashmiri poetry to Nund Rishī and other saints but do not attribute any

⁵ Sanderson identifies him as Rājānaka Bhāskaraṇṭha and as the author of the *Bhāskari*, a commentary on Abhinavagupta’s *Īśvarapratyabhijñānāvimarśinī*, and the *Cittānubodhaśāstra*, “a commentary (-*ṭīkā*) on the Kashmirian *Mokṣopāya* (later expanded and vedānticized as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*)” (2007: 382–83). Sanderson (2007: 422) also proposes that Rājānaka may have written in the late 1600s, rather than the early 1700s, based upon a possible rendering of his lineage of teachers.

⁶ Sanderson identifies Sāhib Kaul as a prolific Sanskrit writer of Śaiva texts in mid-seventeenth-century Kashmir (2007: 409–10, 421). For more details on Sāhib Kaul and his writings, see Hanneder (2001) and Stainton (2013: 138–54).

⁷ For descriptions of these texts, see Rafiqi 2003: 319–21.

poetry to Lal Ded (Rafiqi 2003: 175). Thus, Persian hagiographical accounts of Lal Ded precede, are contemporaneous with, and extend past the time of these two manuscripts of Lal Ded poetry, all without attributing any poetry to Lal Ded. Second, these later manuscripts of vernacular Kashmiri poetry attributed to Lal Ded either feature Sanskrit translations or are bound within a collection of Sanskrit texts. Taking these contexts into consideration should flag these manuscripts as not simply transparent, unbiased sources, but instead possibly intentional efforts to incorporate Lal Ded into Brāhmaṇical, Sanskritic traditions.

However, Brāhmaṇical, Sanskritic traditions and India's premodern Hindu cultures are exactly what interested many Orientalist scholars of India. Exhibiting a level of affiliation with this kind of Orientalist Indology, Barnett provides an extensive "Preliminary Note on Yōga" (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 8–19) immediately following the *Lallā-Vākyāni*'s "Introduction" in which he explains the Sanskrit philosophies and theologies that he thinks comprise Lal Ded's religion and the basis of her poetry.

Grierson was not primarily interested in elite Sanskritic theology but in popular forms of Hindu devotion, especially *bhakti*, and that interest was in no small degree infused with a Romantic idealization of the folk. However, Grierson's (1909, 1910a, 1910b) writings on *bhakti* regularly reference Brāhmaṇical, Sanskrit theologies in order to explain popular Hindu devotion. In regard to Kashmir in particular, though, Grierson identifies not only Lal Ded but also all worthwhile Kashmiri literature, culture, and even people as Hindu and as religiously, intellectually, and poetically descended from Kashmir and India's ancient and medieval Sanskritic worlds. This understanding of Kashmir is demonstrated in his entry on "Kāshmir" in the famous *Linguistic Survey of India* (1927):

But the Happy Valley has received numerous immigrants from India proper; for centuries it has been one of the most celebrated homes of Sanskrit study, and its indigenous literature has grown up under the influence of Sanskrit models. It thus, to a casual observer, and indeed to the learned Kāshmirīs themselves, presents the appearance of a language as truly Indian as Marāṭhi or Hindōstānī. Moreover all the civilization of the country has come from India and it is the only language of Dardistan that has received literary cultivation. No one has a higher appreciation of the learning and genius which have adorned Kashmir from very early times than the present writer. It has legends that the Valley received its population from India, and this is very probably true so far as regards the upper classes, but that the Kāshmirī language has a Dardic basis is a matter of which no philologist can have any doubt....A more important division is that into the Kāshmirī of the Musalmāns (who are many, and uneducated) and that of the Hindūs (who are few and educated). Musalmānī Kāshmirī abounds in foreign words borrowed from Persian, often in distorted forms. Hindū Kāshmirī is very free from admixture with Persian, and, although the home language of Paṇḍits, is singularly free from Tatsamas....Most of the literature of Kashmir is written in Sanskrit, and is deservedly famous. A few works, including a remarkable series of Śaiva

verses by an old poetess named Lal Dēd, a Rāmāyaṇa, and a history of Kṛishṇa, have been written in Kāshmirī itself (112–13).

From the *Lallā-Vākyāni* itself and his *Dictionary of the Kāshmirī Language* (1916–32), it is clear that Grierson knew ‘Alī Hamadānī and other Ṣūfī saints thrived under the Muslim Sulṭāns who ruled Kashmir during Lal Ded’s lifetime. Furthermore, he knew of the famous *Yūsuf Zulaikhā* written in Kashmiri (Grierson 1916–32, 1: ii) and must have known about the sizable amount of Muslim-authored Kashmiri literature. At the very least, he must have known about the volumes of Persian literature produced in Kashmir, not only because of its popular renown, but also because Persian was the official language of the Kashmiri Court until 1889 (Rai 2004: 243).

Thus, for Grierson to depict Kashmiri language, literature, and culture as solely derived and produced by Hindus drawing upon their Sanskrit literati ancestors requires an intentional erasure of centuries of Kashmiri Muslim cultural production. It may even involve a certain bias against Kashmiri Muslims in general, implied by his referring to them as “many, and uneducated” and their Kashmiri as “foreign,” “borrowed,” and an “admixture” with Persian, whereas Kashmiri Hindus are “few and educated” and their Kashmiri, although abounding with Sanskrit lexical borrowings, is neither “foreign” nor an “admixture.” At minimum, Grierson and Barnett must presuppose or establish firm divisions and boundaries between Kashmiri Hindu and Muslim worlds in order to claim that Lal Ded and Kashmiri “civilization” have solely Sanskritic Hindu genealogies.

As a result, Grierson and Barnett do not even consider the possibility that Bhāskara’s Sanskrit translation of Lal Ded’s poetry could be a corruption or self-interested false rendering of Lal Ded and her ideas, because such a consideration would run counter to their understanding of Kashmiri society, its structures of authority, and its trajectories of derivation. Upholding the Stein manuscripts as authoritative, disinterested transcriptions of Lal Ded’s poems allows Grierson and Barnett to frame Lal Ded within their understanding of other popular medieval and early modern Hindu *bhakti* saints; namely, that their religiosity is connected with and derived from earlier, and “higher,” Sanskritic Hindu theology and in no way corrupted by “foreign” Ṣūfism and Islam.⁸

This is why Grierson and Barnett dismiss earlier hagiographical accounts of Lal Ded encountering Ṣūfis. Although they state, “There is hence no inherent difficulty in accepting the tradition of her association with Sayyid ‘Alī” (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 1), it is only as long as Muslims like Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī are understood as having no real effect on Lal Ded and her Hindu religiosity. As soon as there is a story in which a Ṣūfī is said to have had an impact on Lal Ded, they preempt it with the following dismissal: “Numerous stories are current about Lallā in the Valley, but none of them is deserving of literal credence” (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 1). It

⁸ In his recent *Storm of Songs* (2015), Hawley addresses the controversy around Grierson’s opinion that Christianity may have been the outside influence that prompted medieval Hindu religion to turn “from doctrine to emotion at that point—from *jñāna* to *bhakti*” (104, see also 51–53). While Christianity may have been the catalyst for the emergence of *bhakti* for Grierson, the substance of the religion undergoing this change was nevertheless a Hinduism rooted in ancient Sanskritic theology in which Islam plays no part whatsoever.

seems that the main reason they dismiss Persian hagiographical accounts is that those accounts do not accord with the image of Lal Ded that they see in her poetry. Furthermore, in order to solidify and secure their image of Lal Ded, Grierson and Barnett invert the archival record by focusing almost exclusively upon the poetry, whose earliest extant manuscripts date at best to the mid-seventeenth century, and disregarding the hagiographies that date back to the 1580s.

Decompiling a Faulty Collection

Grierson and Barnett justify inverting the archive—that is, privileging recent poetry over older hagiographies—by constructing an argument for the reliability of oral transmission in Kashmir.

While there is thus a complete dearth of ordinary manuscripts, there are, on the other hand, sources from which an approximately correct text can be secured. The ancient Indian system by which literature is recorded not on paper but on the memory, and carried down from generation to generation of teachers and pupils, is still in complete survival in Kashmīr. Such fleshy tables of the heart are often more trustworthy than birch-bark or paper manuscripts. The reciters, even when learned Paṇḍits, take every care to deliver the messages word for word as they have received them, whether they understand them or not. In such cases we not infrequently come across words of which the meaning given is purely traditional or is even lost....Such a record is in some respects more valuable than any written manuscript (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 3, 5).

Thus for Grierson and Barnett, poems collected from reliable reciters more accurately reproduce the authentic voice of Lal Ded from the fourteenth century than any written manuscripts. If orally collected poems are also found in the Stein manuscripts, they serve to validate the manuscripts as accurate, authentic, and reliable, not that oral reciters may have obtained some of their poems from written sources of unknown authenticity.⁹

The aim here is not to cast aspersions on oral transmission. Rather, it is to indicate that in making this strong argument for the superior reliability of oral transmission, Grierson and Barnett must have presupposed that their readers may doubt the reliability of their work. A suspicion of oral transmission was prevalent at the time, especially that of Brāhmaṇas who were perceived to be too personally invested in the contents of their transmissions. These suspicions could have been assuaged by relying upon the Stein manuscripts, pointing out current oral reciters' remarkably accurate reproduction of poems found in those manuscripts, and abandoning the claim that these poems could be confidently traced back to the mouth of a fourteenth-century saint. However, their assertion that oral transmission is "more valuable than any written manuscript" seems to imply that Grierson and

⁹ Even Ramanujan (1986), the great scholar and advocate for Indian folklore and folkloristics, engages the ways in which oral traditions and written texts regularly draw upon each other as sources instead of remaining two separate streams of transmission.

Barnett may have been aware of early manuscripts that conflicted with their depiction of Lal Ded. Furthermore, they are unwilling to relinquish the claim that they are representing a saintly Hindu voice from the fourteenth century, for implied in their work are claims regarding the deep history of Kashmir's Hindu cultural identity in which they are deeply invested. This last point will be addressed more fully momentarily.

A more immediate reason why Grierson and Barnett promote the reliability of Kashmiri oral transmission is in order to imply that their own research process is continuous with that pristine oral tradition, and thus equally as trustworthy. Immediately after stating, "The reciters, even when learned Paṇḍits, take every care to deliver the messages word for word as they have received them, whether they understand them or not," Grierson and Barnett briefly discuss Aurel Stein's collection of *Hatim's Tales* (1923) as an example of Kashmiri Paṇḍits' generally unerring oral transmission. Then without any significant break or transition, Grierson and Barnett launch into a description of how they came by the collection of Lal Ded poems that they translate in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. They narrate that Mukund Ram Shastri, Grierson's main Kashmiri research assistant, recorded the text of Lal Ded's poetry as dictated by a reliable reciter named Dharmadas Darwesh. Mukund Ram then sent the transcript to Grierson, and this oral collection, in consultation with the Stein manuscripts, became the basis of the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Before ending this account, Grierson and Barnett once again call upon the *Hatim's Tales* example to reinforce the reliability of oral transmission and conclude with the sentence, "Such a record is in some respects more valuable than any written manuscript." Framing their collection of Lal Ded poems within a discussion of the flawless accuracy of oral transmission implies the processes of passing down, reciting, collecting, translating, and publishing these verses has been direct, objective, and transparent, and thus the poetry in the *Lallā-Vākyāni* is a reliable, if not complete, set of authentic Lal Ded poems and the closest we will come to the true voice of Lal Ded.

However, the personal letters between George Grierson and Mukund Ram Shastri tell a very different story. First of all, Mukund Ram, Grierson's main research assistant, was primarily employed as head Paṇḍit in the Research and Publications Department of the Hindu Ḍogrā state. In 1904, Jagdish Chandra Chatterji, the director of the department, solicited Grierson as to whether he would be interested in books on Kashmir Śaivism that the department was publishing.¹⁰ This letter demonstrates that even before the Lal Ded project began, the Ḍogrā Court already had a longstanding vested interest in reviving, publishing, and promoting medieval Hindu texts as the cultural heritage of Kashmir and that Grierson was already considered someone who might have parallel or sympathetic interests.

Their personal letters also reveal the collaborative work between Grierson and Mukund Ram to be dramatically different from what is portrayed in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Grierson (1920: 4) claims that he hired Mukund Ram for the Lal Ded project in 1914; however, in 1912 Mukund Ram was already collecting Lal Ded

¹⁰ Jagdish Chandra Chatterji, Letter to George Abraham Grierson, 25 July 1904, Mss Eur E223/268, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

poems for Grierson. In two letters to Grierson written in 1913, Mukund Ram states that over the past four to five years he had collected two hundred and thirty-six Lal Ded poems and had composed twenty verses of commentary for each couplet; however, all of that work was lost when Mukund Ram's house burnt down on December 21, 1912.¹¹ It was a full year before Mukund Ram was back on his feet and collecting Lal Ded poems again from scratch. All of this information is confirmed in a 1914 letter to Grierson from Harold Ernest Rawlence, a physician at Srinagar's Mission Hospital and a mutual friend of Grierson and Mukund Ram:

I have seen Pundit Mukund Ram & he will gladly try & get the poems of Lāl Dēd called *Lallā Vākyāni* together for you. P. M. R. tells me he had 350 or so poems mostly short ones collected & written out with explanatory note. These were of course burnt in his house when all his other things went. I gather he thinks it may be difficult to get some of them again as the old folk from whom he got them have gone the way of all the rest of the world....To return to money affairs, after some discussion Rs 75 was fixed as a price for the poems. I hope you will not think that excessive, it certainly is liberal, but you said it was more or less by way of giving the old man a help over his difficulties. I am sorry to say he seems to me to be aging very much.¹²

Thus, Mukund Ram was not first hired by Grierson to collect Lal Ded poems in 1914 but was recommissioned to regather Lal Ded poems at that time. Furthermore, Mukund Ram originally had more oral sources than Dharmadas Darwesh alone and had collected many more than the one hundred and nine poems published in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Given the fact that Mukund Ram had composed lengthy commentaries on those other verses, he must have deemed them at least as reliable and authentic as the ultimate one hundred and nine. Thus, the one hundred and nine poems in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*, far from being a critical edition of Lal Ded poems, are merely what Mukund Ram could quickly recollect in his spare time.

Philology and the *Lallā-Vākyāni*

Before examining complications involving Mukund Ram Shastri and the Dogrā Court, it is important to ask whether Grierson and Barnett considered their *Lallā-Vākyāni* to be a critical edition of Lal Ded's poems. This question is difficult to answer. On the one hand, they go to great lengths to justify this particular collection of Lal Ded poems and attest to its authenticity and reliability. On the other hand, they attenuate these assertions with a number of caveats. For example, after describing Mukund Ram's recording of Lal Ded verses as dictated by Dharmadas Darwesh, they state, "These materials formed the basis of the present edition. It

¹¹ See Mukund Ram Shastri, Letter to George Abraham Grierson, 5 January 1913, Mss Eur E223/313, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London. See also Mukund Ram Shastri, Letter to George Abraham Grierson, 25 August 1913, Mss Eur E223/313, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

¹² Harold Ernest Rawlence, Letter to George Abraham Grierson, 9 March 1914, Mss Eur E223/267, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

cannot claim to be founded on a collation of various manuscripts, but we can at least say that it is an accurate reproduction of one recension of the songs, as they are current at the present day” (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 4). Furthermore, towards the end of their “Introduction” they state,

Lallā’s songs were composed in an old form of the Kāshmirī language, but it is not probable that we have them in the exact form in which she uttered them. The fact that they have been transmitted by word of mouth prohibits such a supposition. As the language changed insensibly from generation to generation, so must the outward form of the verses have changed in recitation. But, nevertheless, respect for the authoress and the metrical form of the songs have preserved a great many archaic forms of expression (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 7).

These quotations might lead one to believe that Grierson and Barnett are making no claims that their *Lallā-Vākyāni* is a critical edition. However, their frequent gesturing towards philology and its methods suggests otherwise. For example, they discuss the details of the scripts and orthographies of the eighteenth-century manuscripts, textual variants, and possible recensions. Most telling is their consistent reference to Lal Ded’s poetry as comprising a fixed text and their desire to obtain that correct text.

No authentic manuscript of her compositions has come down to us. Collections made by private individuals have occasionally been put together, but none is complete, and no two agree in contents or text. While there is thus a complete dearth of ordinary manuscripts, there are, on the other hand, sources from which an approximately correct text can be secured (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 3).

Immediately following this quotation, Grierson and Barnett begin their lengthy discussion of the reliability of Kashmiri oral transmission, Mukund Ram’s collection of verses from Dharmadas Darwesh, and their consultation of the Stein manuscripts. Thus, Grierson and Barnett seem to be indicating that their *Lallā-Vākyāni* is that “approximately correct text.”

A further complication arises when one scrutinizes Grierson and Barnett’s arguments regarding the reliability of Kashmiri oral transmission. As discussed earlier, Grierson and Barnett argue that Kashmiri oral transmission is reliable because reciters reproduce archaic language in their verses that the reciters do not understand. “They were ‘old words,’ the signification of which had been lost and which had been passed down to him through generations of *ustāds*, or teachers” (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 3–4). Describing Dharmadas Darwesh’s recitation specifically, they state,

As in the case of Sir Aurel Stein’s folk-tales, this text contains words and passages which the reciter did not profess to understand. He had every inducement to make the verses intelligible, and any conjectural emendation would at once have been accepted on his authority; but, following the traditions of his calling, he had the honesty to refrain from this, and said

simply that this was what he had received, and that he did not know its meaning. Such a record is in some respects more valuable than any written manuscript (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 4–5).

Note their reference to Dharmadas Darwesh's recitation as "this text." So confident are they in the reliability of Dharmadas Darwesh's recitation that they treat it like a fixed text equivalent to other manuscripts. "The order of verses in this manuscript is different from that of Dharma-dāsa's text, and we have therefore, in Appendix IV, given a Concordance, showing the correspondence between the two" (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 6). Thus, Grierson and Barnett interpret the use of archaic Kashmiri terms and phrases, especially if the reciter does not understand their meaning, as evidence that the verses, or at least those archaic parts, are authentically medieval in origin and that the oral transmission of those verses is remarkably reliable, "more valuable than any written manuscript."

However, Grierson's arguments regarding the use of archaic forms of the Kashmiri language radically differ elsewhere in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. In "Appendix II: On Lallā's Language," Grierson states,

A certain number of archaic forms have, however, survived; some, on account of their very strangeness, which marked them as old-fashioned, and others, because the language of poetry, with its unvarying laws of metre, always changes more slowly than does that of colloquial speech. In this latter respect the compositions of Lallā are not alone in Kashmir, and all the poetry of her country, even that written in the last century, contains many archaic forms (Grierson and Barnett 1920: 128).

That modern poets may utilize older conventions of a language in order mark their poems as old-fashioned is certainly a familiar practice; some modern poets use Elizabethan English for similar effect. However, if Kashmiri poets within the last century have used archaic Kashmiri forms in their new poetry, then one cannot argue that the presence of archaic Kashmiri in the verses recited by Dharmadas Darwesh proves that those poems, or even the archaic parts of those poems, are Lal Ded's authentic fourteenth-century verses or that Dharmadas Darwesh's recitation must be part of a reliable chain of oral transmission extending back to the fourteenth century and Lal Ded herself. Dharmadas Darwesh may not have understood the meaning of those "old words" himself, but his teacher may have understood them and could have even produced them.

Parsing Grierson and Barnett's arguments and intentions is therefore a precarious endeavor. On the one hand, by addressing the technicalities of the Kashmiri language used in Lal Ded's poetry, especially the prevalence of "old words" in Dharmadas Darwesh's recitation, Grierson calls upon his authority as a serious and committed linguist to assert the reliability of Kashmiri oral transmission and Darwesh's "text." On the other hand, Grierson's linguistic analysis of the Kashmiri language used in Lal Ded's poetry and that used in Kashmiri poetry current in his day seems to conflict with his prior arguments. Likewise, Grierson and Barnett seem to recognize the authority and prestige philology carried among Orientalist Indologists of their day, so they deploy philology throughout their "Introduction."

On the other hand, anticipating the possibility that eminent philologists might not accept oral transmission as a reliable source, they voice the validity of certain objections while simultaneously advancing a strong argument for the unique reliability of Kashmiri oral tradition and of this particular transmission (“text”) of Lal Ded’s poetry specifically.

Grierson and Barnett seem to conclude on a middle ground, that their *Lallā-Vākyāni* is a critical edition of one recension (Dharmadas Darwesh’s “text”) of Lal Ded’s poetry. However, emphasizing that they have analyzed their own text against the earliest known manuscripts of her poetry and it includes all of the poems in those manuscripts, Grierson and Barnett strongly imply that their *Lallā-Vākyāni* is as close as one can come to the critical edition of the true *Lallā-Vākyāni*, the correct, complete, original text of Lal Ded’s authentic poems.

The problems raised do not appear to be resolved by this attenuated conclusion. Nevertheless, Grierson and Barnett seem intent on casting Lal Ded and Kashmiri culture as directly descended from ancient, Sanskritic Hinduism, or at least medieval Kashmir Śaivism, and they call upon the authority of their collection of her poetry and its contents to do so. Grierson and Barnett are hardly unique in this regard. Casting India and its culture as descended from ancient, Sanskritic Hinduism was central to the work of many esteemed Orientalist scholars of the time, from William Jones to Friedrich Max Müller to Monier Monier-Williams, and it served a variety of ends.¹³

Given the precariousness of how the text of the *Lallā-Vākyāni* was produced, it seems less likely that the image of Lal Ded as essentially and exclusively Hindu came as a conclusion from the evidence Grierson and Barnett had at their disposal. Rather, I contend that Grierson and Barnett likely already held the idea reputed among their fellow Orientalist Indologists that Indian civilization descended from ancient, Sanskritic Hinduism. One possible interpretation of Lal Ded could serve to demonstrate that even Kashmiri culture descended from medieval Kashmir Śaivism, and thus validate this highly regarded Orientalist paradigm about India as a whole. Given that it accorded with an understanding of India they held to be true, Grierson and Barnett accepted that possible interpretation of Lal Ded as true as well and then used it to decide whether certain ideas, narratives, and sources about Lal Ded were reputable. Once the sources most compatible with their preconceived notions were asserted as the most reputable, they were used to confirm their conclusions about Lal Ded, Kashmir, and India and establish themselves as scholars in agreement with the most reputable Orientalist Indologists. More than simple confirmation bias, such processes of interpellation and apperception involve issues of identification and self-understanding that will be addressed further below. Nonetheless, I call attention to them here to demonstrate how questions around whether the *Lallā-Vākyāni* is a critical edition are inextricably linked with the politics of Orientalism in addition to those of the Ḍogrā Court.

¹³ Scholarship on this kind of Orientalism in Indology is extensive. Useful entry points into this literature are Inden (1990: 85–130) and Breckenridge and van der Veer (1993).

Mukund Ram Shastri and the Ḍogrā Court

Returning to Mukund Ram and the research behind the *Lallā-Vākyāni*, I have not used the phrase “in his spare time” loosely when discussing Mukund Ram’s regathering of Lal Ded poems after 1914 for the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Between the years 1911 and 1919, when Mukund Ram sent his final collection of one hundred and nine poems to Grierson, many events occurred that impacted Mukund Ram’s collection of Lal Ded poems and the eventual publication of the *Lallā-Vākyāni*.¹⁴ In 1911, the Viceroy and Governor General of India bestowed on Mukund Ram the esteemed title “Mahāmahopādhyāya” for his scholarly assistance to many European Orientalists (Kalia 1997: 94). At the time, Mukund Ram was employed as head Paṇḍit in the Research and Publication Department of Kashmir. Earning this distinction provoked the ire of Jagdish Chandra Chatterji, the director of the department, and Chatterji retaliated by assigning Mukund Ram an excessive workload. At some point before February 1912, Chatterji went missing and Mukund Ram was appointed interim director of the department in his place.¹⁵

However, during budget discussions at the Darbār of Kashmir in 1914–16, it came to light that Chatterji had embezzled large sums of money from the government and fled.¹⁶ Perhaps to recover lost funds or redeem the Ḍogrā Court’s reputation after such an embarrassment, Mukund Ram was ordered to research and publish many volumes, almost entirely in Sanskrit and exclusively related to Kashmir Śaivism. These texts eventually became the famous Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies. Mukund Ram describes these occurrences as follows:

In short, I was required to publish for the Kashmir Darbar some 52 rarest books, bearing on the Advaita Śaiva Philosophy of Kashmir, on western principles of criticism and research. The budget grants of the Department were reduced by about two-thirds of the former expenditure. It would not be out of place to mention here that after an expenditure of lakhs of rupees my predecessor [Chatterji] had edited some four booklets in the course of 14 years. Being aware of his dishonesty and afraid of its coming to light (as it began to do now) my predecessor had already availed himself of leave, and in view of this fact the charge of the Department was given me as offg [*sic*].¹⁷

¹⁴ While much of the following information can be gathered from the correspondences between Mukund Ram and Grierson during this time, Mukund Ram narrates his own complete account of these events in a testimony he wrote in the early 1920s; see Mukund Ram Shastri, “A Peep into the Varied Scenes of my Official Career,” Mss Eur E223/314, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

¹⁵ Mukund Ram Shastri, Letter to George Abraham Grierson, 24 February 1912, Mss Eur E223/313, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

¹⁶ Some records indicate that Chatterji may have been a student of Annie Besant, the president of the Theosophical Society. Given that shortly after fleeing Kashmir Chatterji published several books with the Theosophical Press in Adyar, it may be presumed that he fled to the Theosophical Society headquarters and took refuge there.

¹⁷ Mukund Ram Shastri, “A Peep into the Varied Scenes of my Official Career,” Mss Eur E223/314, *Collection of Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941)*, British Library, London.

Thus, during the precise time in which Mukund Ram was meant to be engaged in the pristine and trustworthy collection of Lal Ded poems for Grierson, not only did his house burn down, but he was also appointed director of Kashmir's Research and Publication Department, was embroiled in an ongoing embezzlement scandal, and was ordered to produce and publish an overwhelming number of critical editions of Kashmir Śaiva texts at the behest and for the benefit of the Ḍogrā Court. It is no wonder that Mukund Ram required an additional five years to regather only 109 Lal Ded poems for Grierson and that Mukund Ram, after such work, would publish a critical edition of the Bhāskara manuscript in 1919 as part of the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies under the title *Lalleśvarī-Vākyāni* (Bhāskara 1919).

The involvement of the Ḍogrā Court in this process should not be overlooked. Mridu Rai (2004) and Chitralekha Zutshi (2004) have rigorously examined many of the dynamics between the Ḍogrā Court and the religious communities of Kashmir in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Rai in particular highlights the agency the Ḍogrā princely state exercised in regard to patronage and the propagation of Kashmiri culture as Hindu even while under the watchful gaze and influence of a British residency. Like most rulers of the time, the Ḍogrā Court pursued the means to legitimate and solidify their position as rulers during a period of political agitation and burgeoning nationalism. What is remarkable is the Ḍogrā Court's focus on Hindu religious identity and heritage in its pursuit of those political aims when the majority of the Kashmiri populace was Muslim.

As already mentioned, one means by which the Ḍogrā Court pursued this agenda was the creation of the Research and Publication Department, which almost exclusively employed Hindu *paṇḍits* to primarily publish Sanskrit Hindu texts from medieval Kashmir. The publication of the *Lalleśvarī-Vākyāni* as a volume in the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies designates Mukund Ram's work on Lal Ded as part of this effort to revive Kashmir's medieval Hindu heritage. In accordance with this agenda, Lal Ded was depicted as exclusively Hindu, and specifically a Trika Śaiva, and any known sources that spoke to the contrary were suppressed. Thus, far from a direct, objective, transparent, and disinterested study, the research process behind the *Lallā-Vākyāni* was deeply interwoven with a number of vested interests and agendas that may unknowingly continue as threads in the tapestry of scholarship on Lal Ded.

Lal Ded After the *Lallā-Vākyāni*

In the *Descriptive Analysis of the Kashmir Series of Texts & Studies* published in the 1950s by Sahibzada Hassan Shah, deputy director of the Research and Publications Department of the Jammu and Kashmir Government, the description of the *Lalleśvarī-Vākyāni* reads as follows:

This little volume contains 60 “sayings” of Lalleśhvarī, popularly Lallā, even Lal Ded, the famous seeress, saint and sage, who certainly made true the ancient words saying that a woman could accomplish spiritual perfection sooner than a man....The original “sayings” are in the Kashmiri language of

her time; but there is published in the volume a rather free Sanskrit translation of them. Lallā might be called Mirabai of Kashmir, except that while Mira was chiefly, even exclusively, emotional; [*sic*] Lallā is predominantly mystical and philosophical. None wanting to see to what spiritual heights a woman could rise should fail to read and study these rapturous song[s] of Lallā. Her philosophy is, of course, pure monistic Trika (KSTS n.d.: 30).

Even years after the dissolution of the Ḍogrā princely state, this Muslim deputy director of the Research and Publications Department identified Lal Ded as unambiguously Hindu and an exponent of Trika Śaivism, and he is not alone in such assertions. While creating a comprehensive review of the scholarship on Lal Ded since Grierson and Barnett's 1920 publication of the *Lallā-Vākyāni* is a larger task than can be completed here,¹⁸ an examination of some of that literature will serve to show how influential the *Lallā-Vākyāni* has been in shaping later scholarship as well as how its framing of Lal Ded has been resisted.

While scholarship on Lal Ded since the *Lallā-Vākyāni* is varied, it can be roughly classified into four categories based on how the issue of Lal Ded's identity is approached. The vast majority of scholarship identifies Lal Ded as a Hindu in the lineage of medieval Trika or Kashmir Śaivism.¹⁹ Some works in this category completely omit mention of her possible interactions with Šūfīs, while some acknowledge those accounts and dismiss them or attempt to disprove them, and still others accept the possibility of such interactions so long as those Šūfīs have no impact on her identity as a Trika Śaiva Hindu. A closely related category to this first one consists of works that discuss her association with Šūfīs and accept that it had an impact on her, but this impact does not change Lal Ded's being first, foremost, and distinctly a Trika Śaiva Hindu.²⁰ Thirdly, there are some texts that claim, often with reference to Kashmīriyat, that Lal Ded was either a Hindu or a Muslim, but that this religious identity was secondary to her sociocultural identity as a Kashmiri.²¹ Finally, there are those works that assert the inverse of the first, dominant group, claiming Lal Ded was a confirmed and committed Muslim who converted to Islam at the hands of the powerful Šūfīs she encountered.²²

In addition to the four categories mentioned above, there are two fundamentally different ways in which scholars have approached Lal Ded and her religious identity. First is the identification of Lal Ded as a wholly syncretic figure. One example of this is the work of Nyla Ali Khan who, while most often identifying Lal Ded as a Šūfī, describes Lal Ded as one who simultaneously rejected both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies and embraced both esoteric Śaiva philosophy and Šūfī

¹⁸ A more detailed examination of this literature can be found in Accardi 2014: 314–22.

¹⁹ While many Śaiva traditions and sects thrived in Kashmir over the ages, the term "Kashmir Śaivism" is often used as synonymous and interchangeable with "Trika Śaivism." For examples of scholarship that identify Lal Ded as a Hindu in the lineage of medieval "Kashmir" or "Trika" Śaivism, see Temple (1924); Kaul (1973); Parimoo (1978); Kotru (1989); Barks (Laldyada 1992); Odin (1999); and Roberts (2010).

²⁰ For example, see Rafiqi (2003: 162–79); M. Khan (2002: 70–79); and Hoskote (Lal Ded 2011).

²¹ A number of these scholars are discussed in N. Khan (2009: 45–62). This position is also mentioned in Kaul (2011: 176) and Zutshi (2004: 16).

²² Those belonging to this category are mentioned in Kishwar (1998: 280) and Zutshi (2004: 20).

mysticism. In her recent book, the chapter “Cultural Syncretism in Kashmir” positively invokes the notion of Kashmīriyat with reference to Lal Ded, stating,

Kashmiris have taken pride in inhabiting a cultural space between Vedic Hinduism and Sufi Islam. The traditional communal harmony in Kashmir enabled the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Hindus,...mutual respect for their places of worship and an ability to synthesize not just cultural but religious practices as well (N. Khan 2009: 25).²³

While religious syncretism is a theoretical lens by which the exclusive division between Hindu and Muslim religious identities may be overcome, it requires tending to the serious critiques syncretism faces as a category of analysis.²⁴ On the other hand, a second group of scholars critically examine identity itself as well as the specific identities that have hitherto been assigned to Lal Ded, opening up the possibility of new theoretical approaches to the study of Lal Ded. One example of such scholarship is that of Zutshi (2004, 2014) whose carefully nuanced approach to religion and Kashmiri history results in her not identifying Lal Ded as primarily either Hindu or Muslim.

With the exception of scholarship pursuing these last two approaches to Lal Ded, the lasting impact of Grierson, Barnett, and Mukund Ram Shastri’s work can be seen in most studies of Lal Ded since the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Their influence can be most clearly seen in the preponderance of work reiterating an exclusively Hindu identity for Lal Ded. However, even scholarship classified in the second, third, and fourth categories, including those who accept Lal Ded’s interaction with Ṣūfīs or assert she was a Muslim, can be seen as falling in line with Grierson, Barnett, and Mukund Ram through their reproduction of the Orientalist paradigm presented in the *Lallā-Vākyāni*; namely, that Hindus and Muslims belong to two distinct and mutually exclusive collective identities incapable of nuanced interreligious understandings. Even those who see Lal Ded as socially crossing communal boundaries as an example of Kashmīriyat replicate this paradigm insofar as Lal Ded’s religious identity and understandings are assigned to one side of this divide and remain largely unchanged as a result of such boundary-crossing social interactions.

Interpellation and the Shaping of Religious Identities

The aim of this paper has not been to invalidate the *Lallā-Vākyāni*. Grierson and Barnett’s elaborate argument for the reliability of oral tradition can be interpreted as an attempt to conceal a less-than-pristine research process behind the *Lallā-Vākyāni*, but there is more at stake. The more significant consequence of the way Grierson and Barnett frame and introduce the *Lallā-Vākyāni* is that it masks their own act of construction. Inverting the archive so that Lal Ded’s poetry precedes the Persian

²³ Also see N. Khan (2007: 25).

²⁴ There is a vast body of scholarship critiquing syncretism, and good entry points into this literature in general are Stewart and Shaw (1994) and C. Stewart (1999). For critiques of syncretism that focus on South Asia, see Bhabha (1994); Gilmartin and Lawrence (2000); T. Stewart (2001); Stewart and Ernst (2003); and Mir (2006).

hagiographies permits them to dismiss accounts that depict Lal Ded as anything other than the Hindu *bhakti* saint they see in the poetry. Moreover, the Hindu identity involved in this Hindu *bhakti* saint image is the modern one familiar to many today—that of a distinct and delimited religious community that worships the gods from classical Sanskrit scriptures and is mutually exclusive from other religions such as Buddhism and Jainism, but most especially Islam.

The implications of making Lal Ded a Hindu saint completely dissociated from Islam are quite profound. If we think of Lal Ded as the subject of a legacy that continues to be retold as a source of identity formation, Grierson, Barnett, and their Kashmiri collaborators' interpellation of Lal Ded as a Hindu defines and restricts how she can act as a subject in later recollections of her legacy.²⁵ Interpellating Lal Ded in this way furthermore projects this new, modern definition of Hinduism into the past, at least to the fourteenth century when Lal Ded lived. The projection of this modern Hindu identity into the past in turn legitimizes two modern projects. First, Orientalist scholarship that portrays Kashmir's past as Sanskritic and Hindu in this modern, exclusive sense appears to be merely accurately representing the past rather than interpreting, shaping, or revising it. Second, the rule of the Hindu Dogrās over the Muslim-majority Kashmiri populace is made to be an actualization of Kashmir's deep Hindu heritage, and thus justified. Studying Lal Ded therefore becomes a moment of apperception, where Orientalists and Dogrā rulers can view themselves through the figure of Lal Ded, and since they themselves are the interpellators, the self-image and self-understanding they perceive completely affirms their current dominant position.

In addition to this self-affirmation of knowledge and power, making Lal Ded a Hindu in this modern sense of Hinduism deprives contemporary Kashmiri Hindus of a figure whose religious identity was configured differently, as a non-Muslim who stood toe-to-toe with Śūfī saints, collaborated with them spiritually, and whose religious understandings were impacted as a result without her necessarily becoming a Muslim. It likewise hinders contemporary Kashmiri Muslims from forming complex religious identities informed by the fact that a non-Muslim figure was revered by Muslim authorities and sought after for spiritual guidance. And finally, it erases alternative forms of interreligious understanding that are possible in the previous legacies of Lal Ded, such as accepting a saint's advanced spiritual status as a fact across religious boundaries while leaving the explanation for that saint's elite status as a matter of interpretation and theological debate. Thus, the damage wrought is not simply the obfuscation of research mishaps and misrepresentations, but an exacerbation of the communal, national, and international tensions that continue to make Kashmir a potent site of conflict.

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²⁵ Here I am using the term "interpellation" with most immediate reference to Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997) but also in connection with Althusser's usage in *On Ideology* (2008) and with reference to the works of J. L. Austin, John Searle, and Jacques Lacan's mirror stage (see Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Butler 1997; Lacan 2007; Althusser 2008).

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